

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 21252 281152Z

44

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1327

INFO DEA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE BANGKOK 21252

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: TH, PGOV, PINT, SNAR

SUBJ: RTG INTEREST IN NARCOTICS: RECENT POLICE PROMOTIONS AND
A POLICE NARCOTICS DIVISION

SUMMARY: RECENT HIGH LEVEL APPOINTMENTS IN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND THE PROPOSED CREATION OF A POLICE NARCOTICS DIVISION ARE POSITIVE SIGNS THAT THE GOVERNMENT OF PRIME MINISTER SENI PRAMOT IS GOING AHEAD WITH PLANS TO CLEAN UP THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND HAS A SERIOUS INTEREST IN NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT. THEY CONTINUE A GRADUAL TREND NOTED IN RECENT YEARS TOWARDS A MORE HONEST AND EFFICIENT POLICE DEPARTMENT, AT LEAST AT THE UPPER LEVELS. END SUMMARY.

1. SEVERAL IMPORTANT APPOINTMENTS HAVE RECENTLY ADDED REPUTABLE HIGH RANKING POLICE OFFICIALS TO THAILAND'S NARCOTICS PROGRAM. THE MOST IMPORTANT WAS THAT OF GENERAL SURAPHON CHUNLAPHRAM ON JULY 16 TO THE POSITION OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE. SURAPHON HAS A VERY GOOD REPUTATION, IS CONSIDERED TO BE HONEST AND HARD WORKING, AND FAVORABLY IMPRESSED HIS AMERICAN HOSTS DURING A RECENT DEA SPONSORED EXECUTIVE TOUR OF THE U.S. SURAPHON WAS APPOINTED OVER A
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 21252 281152Z

MORE SENIOR BUT LESS HONEST POLICE GENERAL. HE WILL BE

ONE OF THREE DEPUTY DIRECTORS. THE OTHER TWO, GENERAL CHUMPHON LOHACHALA AND GENERAL MONTCHAI PHANKHONGCHUN, ARE ALSO HIGHLY RESPECTED OFFICERS. GENERAL NARONG MAHANON, ANOTHER RESPECTED POLICE OFFICER, MOVED UP FROM COMMISSIONER OF METROPOLITAN POLICE TO BECOME ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE.

2. OTHER APPOINTMENTS INCLUDED THAT OF COLONEL TOEM SANITWONG AS HEAD OF THE CRIME SUPPRESSION DIVISION, AND MAJOR GENERAL WICHIAN SAENGKAEAO AS COMMISSIONER OF THE BANGKOK METROPOLITAN POLICE. BOTH MEN ARE OF A HIGH CALIBER AND HAVE EXCELLENT REPUTATIONS. ALL OF THE ABOVE NEWLY APPOINTED INDIVIDUALS HAVE DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE THAI NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT EFFORT, AND THEY ARE A BOON TO THE NARCOTICS PROGRAM.

3. IN ANOTHER IMPORTANT SIGN OF RTG INTEREST IN NARCOTICS COL. CHAWALIT YOTMANI, CHIEF OF THE POLICE NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION CENTER, WAS CALLED FROM THE INTERPOL-COLOMBO PLAN NARCOTICS MEETING IN CHIANG MAI TO A SPECIAL MEETING AT THE REQUEST OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE. COL. CHAWALIT WAS REQUESTED TO FURNISH THE PRIME MINISTER WITH A PLAN TO CREATE A NARCOTICS DIVISION WITHIN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT. HE WAS ASKED TO SUPPLY BUDGET ESTIMATES AND INFORMATION ON THE NUMBER OF MEN AND THE KINDS AND AMOUNTS OF EQUIPMENT THAT WILL BE REQUIRED. WHILE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DIVISION WILL PROBABLY TAKE TIME, IT WILL MEAN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN RTG ANTI-NARCOTICS CAPABILITIES.

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